

Personal Notes

Thirty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 160A, November 20, 2011

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The Look of Catholics: Portrayals in Popular Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War is untenable. The book is by Anthony Burke Smith, which I intend to read this fall. A book review by Nancy L. Roberts, which I have read, is in the current issue of The Journal of American History. What makes the book untenable is that, in her review, Roberts has nothing about Black Catholics.¹

Black Catholics are a viable part of the Catholic Church. Saint Vincent de Paul Church has the second largest Black Catholic congregation in the Diocese of Richmond. There is an annual Black Diocesan Retreat where presenters frequently are heroes of the civil rights movement.

Despite this reality, Roberts sets up the book as “the definitive scholarly study of Catholic popular culture and its relationship to American cultural, social and political life.” I anticipate writing a letter to the editor of The Journal of American History, commenting on the review. If Smith does leave out Black Catholics, then the review is wrong to judge the book as definitive. If Smith incorporates Black Catholics, then the Roberts review has left a misimpression of its scholarly argument.

Throughout church history in America, Black Catholics were a vital part of the otherwise European immigrant Church. Although not always, Black and White Catholics bonded during the Civil Rights Movement. That bonding is an essential part of the story of the Twentieth-century immigrant Church joining mainstream America.

Underlying all of the above is spirituality, grounded in the sacred liturgy of weekly services. The readings for this Sunday offer some guidance to motivate interracial behavior based on Judeo-Christian love. Sacred Scripture does not come to the Faithful in a vacuum. Sacred Scripture is to be lived in the context of the vicissitudes of life. In this case, a little bit of focus, at least, is due racism.

1 Corinthians 15:22 reminds the Faithful, *just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life* ... meaning that the civil rights movement is not only part of United States culture in general, but also part of United States culture among Catholics in particular. Ezekiel 34:16 tells the tale, *the lost I will seek out*. In this case, those *lost* are American Black Catholics in the book covering the timeframe of the civil rights movement from the Great Depression to the Cold War.

Within this context, *The LORD is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want* is the boast of confidence this Sunday, before the judgment seat of God. Holy Scripture is there to motivate the Faithful “to make this a better place,” as the popular song has it.

¹ Nancy L. Roberts, review of Anthony Burke Smith, The Look of Catholics: Portrayals in Popular Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War in The Journal of American History, Vol. 98, No. 1 (June 2011) 259-260.

Personal Notes

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First Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6 (1)
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
Alleluia: Mark 11:9, 10
Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

Annotated Bibliography

Musings above the solid line draw from material below the line. Those uninterested in scholarly and tangential details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some interesting details.

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

The NABRE carries a greater sense of judgment than does the Lectionary.

Meaning changes significantly between the Lectionary and NABRE

Verse Lectionary

NABRE

11 tend ... tend ...tend ... deliver ... examine ... examine ... examine ... deliver

16 ... shepherding them rightly. I will shepherd them in judgment.

Ezek 34:11-17

Karl William Weyde, MF, review of Anja Klein, Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Ez 34-39²

Klein uses redactional criticism to try to piece together the order in which Ezekiel developed. She regards 34, the “Shepherd Chapter,” verses 11-16 as at the substance of what Ezekiel has to say for the Diaspora in exile. Weyde reports that Klein is brilliant, but wonders if she has built a castle in the sky (my words), rather than on the solid rock of full academic rigor.

Psalm 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6 (1)

Funerals makes the Twenty-third Psalm available in four places,³ Pastoral Care of the Sick in three.⁴

² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2011) 123.

³ N.a., International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and

Personal Notes

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The setting for this Psalm is mountainous, with some fast moving streams. The place is treacherous. The paths are difficult. There is not much sunlight. The flock needs guidance.

The NABRE is easier to understand than the Lectionary. Differences are so many and the Psalm is so respected that everything is laid out below.

Verse 1

Lectionary: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

NABRE: The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

Verse 2

Lectionary: In verdant pastures he gives me repose.

Beside restful waters he leads me;

NABRE: In green pastures he makes me lie down;

to still waters he leads me;

Verse 3

Lectionary: he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths

for his name's sake.

NABRE: he restores my soul.

He guides me along right paths

for the sake of his name.

Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998) 143, 223, 253, 267.

⁴ The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: Approved for use in the dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See: Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy: a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1983) 171, 188, 323.

Personal Notes

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Verse 5

Lectionary: You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

NABRE: You set a table before me.
In front of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Verse 6

Lectionary: Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

NABRE: Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

1 Cor 15:28

Jon Sobrino, S.J., "Jesus of Galilee from the Salvadoran Context: Compassion, Hope, and Following the Light of the Cross"⁵

Sobrino argues that following Jesus back to his home in Galilee is much like following him into El Salvador or, I would add, into the inner cities of the United States. The result is to find the exhilarating light that God sheds on all creation, with *all his enemies under his feet*, I would point out, in parallel with the Twenty-third Psalm.

⁵ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 2009) 458.

Personal Notes

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1 Cor 15:21-23

Robert J. Miller, review of Geza Vermes, The Resurrection⁶

Miller uses 1 Corinthians 15:21-23 to show that Vermes presents his argument in a self-contradictory way. Miller writes,

... 'Paul frequently refers to 'life' or 'eternal life,' but he does so without explicitly alluding either to the Resurrection of Jesus or to a resurrection in general' (p. 130), although a few pages earlier V. (correctly) reads 1 Cor 15:21-23 to say that the risen Christ enabled Christians 'to have a share in life through his resurrection' (p. 124)."

In other words, Vermes is far from convincing.

1 Cor 15:27-28

Yung Suk Kim, review of Sion Kim, Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke⁷

Suk Kim concludes, "... many scholars will find it difficult to recommend this book to anybody who is serious about the intersection of theology and politics as well as about critical methodological approaches to the text."

1 Cor 15:28

Hyun-Chul Cho, S.J., "Interconnectedness and Intrinsic Value as Ecological Principles: An Appropriation of Karl Rahner's Evolutionary Christology"⁸

Cho argues, "... the vision of the new creation inspires us with an unquenchable hope for a world in which the ecological principles of interconnectedness and intrinsic value are fully actualized and manifest and where 'God may be all in all' (1 Cor 15:28)."

Mark 11:9, 10

Matthew 25:31-46

Matthew 25:31-46 is available for Funerals.⁹

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 4 (October 2008) 849.

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 3 (July 2009) 649.

⁸ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 2009) 637.

⁹ N.a., International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of

Personal Notes

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Matthew 25:31

Daniel B. Wallace, With Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes: Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament¹⁰

The Lectionary translation is *upon his glorious throne*. The sense of *glorious* is stronger than the English adjective. In the Greek, *glorious* is an attributive genitive, in other words, *throne of glory*. Wallace characterizes the usage as follows: "It is similar to a simple adjective in its semantic force, though more emphatic: it "expresses quality like an adjective indeed, but with more sharpness and distinctness." [Wallace is quoting Robertson, another grammarian.]

Matthew 25:25-46

Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on God is Love"¹¹

Just as I am concerned about the place of Black Catholics in the Church, so is Balasuriya concerned about the place of Indian (from India) Catholics in the Church. Balasuriya faults the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI of the admonition of Matthew, 25:45, *what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me*.

Since, next week, I intend to note that the Vatican gives evidence of not understanding the relationship between the church and the Faithful in the pews, I quote Balasuriya here.

The link between the celebration of the sacraments, ministry, and action for justice is not noted. ... passes over centuries of alliance between the Church and Christians and an exploitive social order that included slavery, colonialism, and feudalism. ... In our part of the world, one is inclined to ask: for whom was the Encyclical written, and by whom? Should not the God of "Deus Caritas Est" necessarily imply that God is also the God of justice? Does not the story of the Good Samaritan imply an imperative to rid ourselves of bandits who waylay defenseless travelers?

Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998) 233.

¹⁰ Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, 86-87.

¹¹ Crosscurrents, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2006) 237, the quotation is found on 248.

Personal Notes

Thirty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 160A, November 20, 2011

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There is more, however. As a retired college professor, I grow weary of the Faithful praying for college students, but not their professors. I grow weary of the Faithful praying that new high school graduates will keep the Faith of their Fathers in college, without either a concern that those young graduates have the courage to think or the courage of their convictions. Balasuriya bears my concerns. "The Pope quotes Luke recalling the parables of the rich man and poor Lazarus and of the prodigal son and Matthew 25:25-46 which can be interpreted in terms of charity as social service, but not the proclamation of the liberative mission of Jesus." The liberative mission of Jesus is the purpose of thinking in the context of college life. Balasuriya goes on:

Why hasn't there been a serious questioning of the presupposition on which an intolerant Christian practice was developed and defended over the centuries?

How has such a theological interpretation of the Trinity led to a Christianity that is exclusivist and disposed to be intolerant to other faiths? The exclusivist interpretation of salvation led to the intolerance of Christians and even to persecution of others when Christians were in power. Mission was for the conversion of others to the Church. The theology of the day implicitly and even explicitly justified the use of force for conquering peoples and bringing them to the faith, which could be called proselytism.

Much of this may now be bypassed or changed, but the basic presuppositions of original sin have not been given up. They are repeated in the liturgy of Easter.

Since human languages and cultures are different and the human mind has limitations in comprehending or interpreting the divine mystery, there is a likelihood of multiplicity of interpretations or paths to the Divine. Christianity, teaching monotheism, claimed to know the nature of the Divine and of the actions of God in history. The God of love is interpreted as partial in favoring the people of Israel. The European peoples took advantage of such an interpretation of Christian mission to go out to conquer the rest of the world and build the present unjust world order.

Part II of the Encyclical deals with charity as a responsibility of the church and a manifestation of Trinitarian love. In this section the Pope emphasizes the need and obligation of the Church for service of the needy rendered in a loving manner. While appreciating this perspective, our comments are meant to draw attention to the sidestepping of love fully realized, as a state of being that required justice for all individuals, locally and globally.

Personal Notes

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Matt 25:24-35

Frank J. Matera, review of Stephen H. Travis, Christ and the Judgment of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution in New Testament Thought (2nd ed.)¹²

Matera reports that Travis makes a good argument that divine judgment consists in a hardening of the relationship or lack thereof, between the divine and the human, rather than retribution or anything external.

Matt 25:31-46

Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees"¹³

Groody concludes, "The migrant reveals the paradoxical truth that the poor are not just passive recipients of charitable giving but bearers of the gospel that cannot be encountered except by moving out into places of risk and vulnerability (Mt 25:31-46)." But, inhabitants of the inner-city are neither migrants nor refugees. I think inhabitants do well to begin with fellow inner-city inhabitants as they look outside to more esoteric migrants and refugees. There is more by Groody below.

Matt 25:31-33, 35-36, 41

John E. Thiel, "Time, Judgment, and Competitive Spirituality: A Reading of the Development of the Doctrine of Purgatory"¹⁴

Thiel makes a distinction between Paul, who regards humans as incapable of good without divine help and Matthew who regards humans as responsible for doing good. At the Last Judgment, Christians expect divine judgment. Thiel describes development of final expectations, "which, in a Christian context, amounts to worry about the final integrity of one's life, about its ultimate meaningfulness or meaninglessness, about its consummate happiness or desolation." When measured against the incredible example of Jesus and the martyrs, Thiel argues a place like Purgatory is suited for making up the difference.

¹² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 4 (July 2009) 912.

¹³ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 2009) 663, 665.

¹⁴ Theological Studies, Vol. 69, No. 4 (December 2008) 749.

Personal Notes

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Matt 25:32

Walter T. Wilson, review of Matthias Konradt, Israel, Kirche und die Volker im Matthauevangelium¹⁵

Wilson reports that Konradt has an overblown view of himself, particularly for bypassing consideration that “universal mission paves the way for universal judgment” involving *all nations*.

Mat 25:40

Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant: A Spiritual Geography of a Crucified People”¹⁶

Quoting Jon Sobrino, Groody argues, “that when followers of Jesus witness the [symbolic] crucifixion of the innocent, this encounter functions as a real sign drawing us into the reality of the paschal mystery (‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me’ (Mt. 25:40)). Groody is cited in a different article in the same genre, above.

Matt 25:40

Jerome A. Miller, “Wound Made Foundation: Toward a Theology of Redemption”¹⁷

From *you did for me*, Miller argues that Jesus takes unto himself the wounds of humanity and redeems them unto the glory of God. Jesus does not undo the wound and make it whole. Jesus, rather, accepts the evil and turns it around for his Father who is in heaven. Miller presents his argument as a *heuristic* or beginning of a solution to the problem of evil. My personal, practical response is a devotion to the Stations of the Cross. The Stations do not answer anything; they just help bear the consequences of evil.

Matt 25:40, 45

Teresa Okure, S.H.C.J., “Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42) in Africa”¹⁸

Okure argues that derogatory attitudes toward women and other marginalized people are best recalculated in the light of how the Faithful want to treat Jesus.

¹⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 4 (October 2008) 836.

¹⁶ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 2009) 310.

¹⁷ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 2009) 545.

¹⁸ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 2009) 416.

Personal Notes

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Matthew 25:40

Bettye Collier-Thomas, Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979¹⁹

The Reverend Florence Spearing Randolph (1866-1951) preached a sermon on "If I were White" in 1941 in New Jersey. She gave this sermon February 14, Valentine's Day, months before Pearl Harbor, December 7. Her verse of choice was, *inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the lest of these my brethren ye have done it unto me*. Her point was that if she were White, she could not tolerate racial prejudice. This sermon took courage on her part.

For my background and more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes.

¹⁹ San Francisco, CA 94103-1741: A Wiley Imprint: 1998, 112.